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SUBJECT: Philippine Response on ADB Safeguard Review

Ref: SECSTATE 21473

¶1. Philippine Department of Finance Director Stella Laureano told us on March 23 that she shares the concerns of the Asian Development Bank's U.S. Mission on the draft revised safeguard policies that address free, prior, and informed project consent of indigenous peoples. Laureano commented that seeking 100% consensus from indigenous groups in the Philippines has blocked worthwhile infrastructure projects. She agreed that "more workable" approaches, including those suggested by the U.S., should be explored.

¶2. Laureano expects that the safeguard policy draft will soon be circulated to relevant Philippine government agencies, including the Department of Finance, the National Economic and Development Authority, and the Department of Budget and Management. She indicated that these agencies fully appreciate the need to adopt language that will not unduly impair Asian Development Bank funding. These agencies will confer with the Philippines' National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. Laureano agreed to inform us of the results of those consultations.

KENNEY